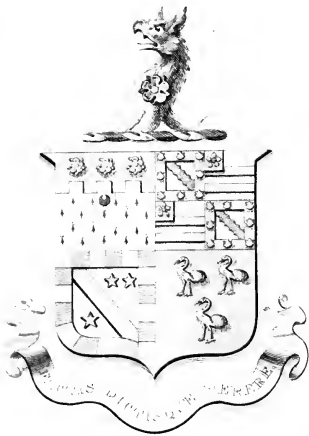


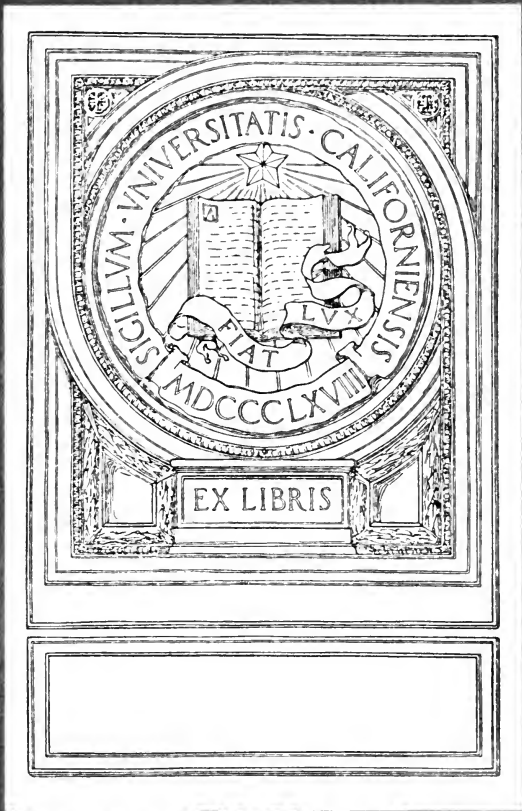
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*John Custace Gualbe.*





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By Wm Hall

ESSAY  
ON  
CHURCH PATRONAGE.

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# ESSAY

ON

## CHURCH PATRONAGE;

OR

### A BRIEF INQUIRY,

ON THE GROUND OF SCRIPTURE AND ANTIQUITY,

INTO

THE PEOPLE'S RIGHT OF CHOOSING  
THEIR OWN MINISTER.

*By the Rev. John Sinclair M.A. Rumb. Coll.  
Minister of S. Paul's Great Episcopal Chapel Edin.  
and Author of "Disputations vindicating the  
of England".*

*Argumentum pessimi turba est.*

SENEC. de Vit. Beat. c. 2.

*33 George Street Edinburgh*

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TO THE  
PATRONS OF CHURCHES

THROUGHOUT GREAT BRITAIN,

THIS  
VINDICATION OF THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



*The Author of these pages has inscribed his Essay to the Patrons of Livings throughout Great Britain, because the question of Church Patronage, although hitherto it has been chiefly agitated in Scotland, is every day brought forward by Dissenters, with increasing zeal and confidence, in every quarter of the empire, and can no longer be evaded or overlooked by the authorities in either church.*

*His reason for withholding his name is chiefly to avoid coming publicly into collision with individuals whose piety as well as learning he holds in cordial and affectionate esteem ; while justice to the great cause which he has undertaken to defend, makes him endeavour to give their sentiments a somewhat decided and unceremonious confutation. He conceives also, that by the impersonal method of address, he may adopt a style more likely to attract and interest the general reader, than by the more correct, but less spirited phraseology of dissertation.*



ON

## CHURCH PATRONAGE.

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THE question of Church Patronage, now so vehemently agitated throughout Scotland, naturally divides itself into three branches : What are the rights of the people by the constitution of the Church of Scotland ? What are the rights of the people by the constitution of the Church of Christ ? And with what degree of influence over elections is it *expedient* that the people should be entrusted ? Two of these inquiries have been discussed on both sides, at great length, and with much learning and ability. To ascertain the constitution of the Church of Scotland, the two Books of Discipline, the writings of the Scottish Reformers, and the early history of the Kirk, together with the records of Parliament, and the acts of the Assembly, have all been ransacked with indefatigable perseverance, and compared with one another with such logical acuteness, that the merits of the case are now fully and distinctly, though perhaps somewhat voluminously, before the world. The

question of *expediency* has also undergone a thorough investigation, and all the arguments for all imaginable forms of popular election,—by male parishioners of a certain age—by heads of families—by communicants—by a select or an open vestry—by evangelical believers,—or by persons whose attendance at divine service reaches annually a certain average, have been pressed upon our notice, in ardent and uncompromising rivalry. On the other hand, the insurmountable objections to each and all of these “devout imaginations” have been so powerfully set forth in tracts and reviews, in lectures and debates, in pamphlets and parliamentary examinations, that the public, harassed and exhausted by these clamorous dissensions, would almost prefer repose and comfort under the worst of systems, before the labour and anxiety of searching after the best.

Meanwhile the constitution of the Church of Christ, the remaining question to be discussed, has been suffered to continue in a situation the most anomalous. A numerous, active and increasing party, both within the Kirk and without, have been long maintaining that the people possess a right—*a right divine, and indefeasible*—to the election of their own ministers; and that the Church of Scotland, be its original constitution what it may, is not conformable in its present system to the scriptural and primitive model. Those who maintain these sentiments, and yet remain within the Kirk, profess their hope, that by the abolition of lay patronage, the Establishment will ere long be brought into accordance with the rules of Scripture and the practice

of antiquity \*. Those without the Kirk in general perceive, that the rights of patrons, and the possession of temporalities, are inseparably connected—that lay patronage cannot be abolished while the Kirk continues to be established—that the representatives of those munificent benefactors, who, while they stipulated for the privilege of nomination, set aside a portion of their rental for the spiritual instruction of the people, are entitled to resume the endowment, should the privilege, without their full consent, be taken from them. Meanwhile, as these determined adversaries have had sagacity to perceive, a strong plea is furnished for withdrawing the affections of the people from the institutions of their ancestors. The assertion of popular rights is soothing to the vanity of the multitude; it is in accordance with “the spirit of the age;” it may be stated pointedly in a few words; it seems to have a plausible foundation, on a superficial study of the inspired writers and the early fathers; and the opposers of it are open to the suspicion, or the insinuation, of being influenced by political considerations, and of having more regard for the law of man than for the law of God.

But while two strong parties *intra muros et extra* are thus vehemently asserting democratical pretensions, on the lofty ground of Scripture and antiquity,

\* The assertors of the people’s claims generally stigmatise *lay* patronage as the object of their aversion; but as they never propose *ecclesiastical* patronage, would it not be better for them to designate the patronage they object to, as being *external*, in contradistinction to *internal*, or *sole*, in opposition to *popular*?

to our astonishment and regret, no answer to them has hitherto been attempted. This great field of battle is abandoned to the foe. The learned and acute controversialists, who, on narrower grounds, so successfully encounter them, unaccountably distrustful of themselves or of their cause, retire with pusillanimity, or perhaps with prudence, from the arena of antiquity. From their strange and long-continued silence on this point, while on others they are so loquacious, we might almost suppose the Books of Discipline more important than the books of the New Testament; the Acts of the Assembly more decisive than the Acts of the Apostles; the conjectures of John Knox, or the guesses of Andrew Melville, as to the constitution of the primitive church, more convincing and satisfactory than the testimony of Tertullian, or the declarations of St Cyprian.

The Author of these pages has not personally the disadvantage, or, he might rather say, the solid comfort of Church Patronage. He derives no revenue from an establishment. Yet seeing error rapidly gaining ground,—error, as he conceives, no less unfounded than it is pernicious,—he feels desirous to bring the subject into a manageable compass, and to place it in a clear point of view. He is not insensible to his own manifold deficiencies, nor to the vast importance of the question he has undertaken to illustrate. He obtrudes his views upon the public only because others better qualified have expended their whole labour and ingenuity on inferior arguments, and would gladly see this essay superseded



by some elaborate work, following the same line of argument with greater learning and ability.

It is proposed, in what follows, to elucidate, by an historical analysis, the mode in which, for several centuries, the officers of the Church were elected : we shall endeavour to demonstrate, that the choice belonged exclusively to the ecclesiastical authorities, who were bound to provide ministers for the people, according to such rules and canons as they from time to time should judge best calculated to promote the cause of sound religion : we are prepared to shew, that the only privilege conceded by them to the people was that of giving evidence as to the moral fitness of the candidates : and we shall, finally, explain how lay patronage arose, and how it may be reconciled with the spiritual independence of the Church.

But before proceeding farther, there are three particulars necessary to be premised, before the reader can be prepared to enter with advantage on the discussion of a subject, as difficult as it is important. One preliminary is, that the people's right to choose their own minister is not a point to be taken for granted, or admitted as a *natural* right. If the right be theirs at all, it must be theirs by *grace*, and not by nature ; for although the minister, as the Apostle represents him, is the people's "servant for Jesus' sake," being as zealous to promote their spiritual interests as if he were indeed their servant, yet in a higher, as well as stricter view, he is the servant, the minister, and ambassador of Christ. He is the steward of God. "A Bishop," says St Paul, "must be blameless, as

“ the steward of God.” But is it not for God to nominate his own stewards? Is it not for Christ to choose his own servants, ministers, and ambassadors? He may delegate the choice to the people, but is he obliged to do so? Are we warranted to assume that this must *of necessity* be the course which he has taken? Surely we are bound to inquire, deliberately and candidly, whether he may not have adopted some other method, and to ascertain, for that purpose, from the ancient monuments of the church, what canons of election were laid down, or what customs were established by his inspired Apostles acting in his name.

A second preliminary, important to be ascertained, is where the *onus probandi* lies; whether on him who advocates the rights of the people, or on him who advocates the rights of the church officers; whether on him who says that the lay brethren have the privilege of choosing their own minister, or on him who gives the privilege to the ecclesiastical authorities—to a Bishop, or a Presbytery. Now, it seems to us incontestable that the *onus* rests entirely with the people’s advocate; for all the precedents, both of Scripture and antiquity, unite in proving that at least the right of granting *ordination* belonged exclusively to the church officers, who alone could give authority to minister in the congregation. But unless evidence to the contrary can be produced, there is a strong presumption, that whoever gives authority, chooses the individual to receive it; that the ordainer selects the candidate to be ordained. No third party can be assumed, before his claim has been establish-

ed, to have any right of interfering, and of dictating to the Bishop or Presbytery what persons they shall invest with sacred functions. It is not enough, therefore, for the religious agitator to gather a mist over the subject, and then exclaim that his cause is won; on the contrary, unless he clearly shews the privilege of electing to have been completely separated from the power of granting ordination, his cause is lost; the elector and ordainer merge into the same person.

A third particular to be noticed is, that the assessor of the people's claims must shew that popular election, in the apostolical and primitive church, *uniformly and universally* prevailed. The lofty superstructure of a right, divine and indefeasible, cannot be established on the narrow basis of a few partial and ambiguous precedents, contradicted by other precedents. To sustain his principle, he must shew them to be numerous and invariable; for if ministers in some places were elected by church officers, and in others by the people, it would be obvious, that no precise rule upon the subject had been divinely appointed, but that the Church was left to regulate the question at its own discretion. If, however, the method of designation be discretionary, there is no pretence for agitation, on the ground of anti-popular assumptions; and yet we are prepared to shew, that during the whole of the three first centuries,—the best and purest ages of Christianity,—there is no evidence whatever of authoritative intervention by the people.

The first example of an ecclesiastical appointment, after the ascension of our Lord, is the designation of

Matthias to fill the place in the Apostolic College, rendered vacant by the apostasy and suicide of Judas. This example is in general regarded as the stronghold of democratical pretensions. Even the election to an Apostleship, it is alleged, was determined by the votes of the people. This assertion has a plausible appearance, but will not bear the test of strict examination; for, on the one hand, granting votes to have been taken, we are prepared to shew that this circumstance would be no precedent for popular election, and, on the other hand, we can produce the strongest evidence that no voting took place at all.

The votes imagined to have been given on this occasion would be of no importance, if they were real; for the laity were here, at best, most inadequately represented. The whole assembly consisted only of one hundred and twenty persons, from whom are to be deducted the eleven Apostles, the seventy Disciples, who bore the rank of Presbyters, and the women who came from Galilee; leaving only a small fraction of laymen, some of whom were no ordinary individuals, being our Lord's own immediate kindred. This portion of lay delegates seems particularly small, when we consider that our Lord had recently appeared to "above five hundred brethren at once." But it is more important to remark, that St Peter's speech was evidently addressed to the Apostles only. The chief reason for a different opinion, is the exordium "Men and brethren," where our translators, without authority from the original, have introduced the word "and," whereas the phrase *ἀνδρες ἀδελφοί*—to give a full equivalent in English—might be rendered, "Ye

“men who are my brethren,” and, without question, refers to the Apostles, not to the whole assembly, some of whom were *women*. Besides, in specifying the body out of whom the choice was to be made, he uses the expression, “Wherefore, out of these men which have companied with us.” But the phrase, “of *these* men,” could not possibly apply to the very persons he was addressing. Speaking to the multitude as electors, he would have said “among you;” but speaking to the Apostles, he naturally pointed to the multitude, and said, “of *these* men.” There are evidently two parties mentioned; the party whom the speaker was addressing, and the party out of whom the election was to be made; the one denoted by the word “*us*,” the other by the phrase, “*these men* which have companied with us;” the one the persons accompanied, the others the persons accompanying. And it is obvious that the party who appointed the two candidates was the party spoken to,—the party signified by the term “*us* ;” or, in other words, the Apostles themselves.

But further, there is no evidence to prove that any voting took place at all—that besides Joseph and Matthias a third candidate could be found who possessed the necessary qualification. No doubt all the multitude had companied with the Apostles, but very few of them “all the time, from the baptism of “John” till the ascension of our Lord. The ancient tradition probably is correct, that these were the only duly qualified persons, and that both of them were admitted into the apostolic college, Matthias imme-

diately, and Joseph some time after, under the well-known name of Barnabas.

It is the more certain that no suffrages could have been given, because the object of casting lots was to leave the decision with God, and to give the new Apostle the same advantage with his elder brethren, that of an immediate designation from Heaven; and no proceeding could be more objectionable than to intermix a human with a divine choice,—for the Disciples to assume the power of choosing among the candidates, and thus arbitrarily to restrict the Founder of the Church in his election. Such a restriction would have been indecent and profane; it would have been, as it were, to present a leet to the Almighty—a supposition to be at once rejected with abhorrence and indignation.

The only reason for supposing suffrages to have been given, is the word *συγκαταψήφισθη*, or numbered, which, in its primary signification, would imply that votes were taken, although, in a secondary and more usual sense, it is employed to denote collating or appointing. In the present instance, to take the word in its primary sense would be impious and absurd; it would imply that votes were taken at a stage in the business, when no man in his senses would suppose that voting could have place. It would suppose that the people or the Apostles put the question to the vote, after a positive determination by Almighty God; for we read a solemn prayer to him who “knoweth the hearts of all men,” that he would be pleased to indicate which of the two candidates he had chosen. We are then informed that lots were

given forth, and that the lot fell upon Matthias; after which, according to this strange hypothesis, the people were induced to give their suffrages in his favour, and voted him into the number of the Apostles.

But a worse absurdity results from taking this expression in the sense of voting or electing; for it has the preposition *σὺν* or “with” prefixed, and the words *μετὰ τῶν ἑνδεκά ἀποστόλων* are immediately subjoined. Now, although the whole clause may with strict propriety be rendered, “he was numbered together with the eleven Apostles,” it cannot possibly be rendered, “he was chosen by suffrages together with the eleven Apostles,” otherwise it would follow, that the people voted the whole twelve at once into the Apostleship. It is clear, therefore, that if the term in question refers to suffrages at all, it denotes a suffrage that supersedes all human voting—the judgment, sentence, and determination of God. “It is to me a wonder,” says the learned Grotius, “by what argument some persons have persuaded themselves that Matthias was elected by the people to the apostolic office, for I perceive in St Luke no trace whatever of election.”

We have dwelt at some length on this first example of an ecclesiastical designation, because, as we have already noticed, it is commonly regarded as the stronghold of popular pretensions. The second case to be considered, is the nomination of the Seven Deacons, which, next to the appointment of Matthias, is most frequently alleged as a precedent for democratical assumptions. The circumstances are these: Mur-

murs had arisen among the Grecians against the Hebrews, that their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. The Apostles consult together upon the subject. They resolve on instituting an inferior order of church officers, on whom this charge may be devolved ; and to prevent all suspicion of partiality on so delicate a subject as the funds of the Church, they enjoin the body of the disciples, whose whole property, be it remembered, had been subscribed, to choose the Deacons for themselves \*. This injunction has of course been eagerly laid hold of by the advocate of an ecclesiastical republic, as a pretence for magnifying the populace. " Here," he exclaims, " you see the people exercising their undoubted right, and in presence of the Apostles themselves electing their own pastors." This burst of triumph, however, is premature ; for it was not their own *pastors* whom the multitude were permitted to elect, but their own *stewards*,—the managers of their own pecuniary affairs. The choice of deacons by lay suffrage is no precedent for the choice of presbyters ; unless we are prepared to maintain, that the lesser contains the greater,—that wherever power is given of nominating to a lower office, it follows of necessity that power is given of nominating to a higher,—that whoever appoints his own advocate or solicitor must, on that account, have the right to ap-

\* In illustration of St Paul's anxiety to avoid evil surmisings, where pecuniary affairs were in question, see 2 Cor. viii. 21, where he rejoices that St Luke had accompanied him to Jerusalem, when he carried thither the contributions of the faithful, because all suspicion of embezzlement was thus precluded.



point his judge,—that whoever chooses a member of the Commons must also have a right of choosing a member of the Cabinet,—that whoever has a vote in the election of his churchwarden, must therefore have a vote in the election of his minister and his diocesan.

But farther, the power on this occasion entrusted to the populace is very limited, and forms a pitiful foundation for the bold assertion of a right “divine and indefeasible;” for the Apostles alone resolved on the institution of the diaconate: they alone fixed the number of the deacons, and the qualifications to be required of them; and they alone bestowed on them at last their ecclesiastical authority. “Look ye out among you,” says St Peter, “seven men of good report, whom we may appoint over this business\*.” The governors of the Church were sole judges whether the candidates presented to them possessed the requisite qualifications, and reserved to themselves a veto on the people’s nomination, thus marking clearly that in their own persons all authority was concentrated.

We may conclude this second argument, like the preceding, in the words of a distinguished foreign theologian. Beza thus sums up the question under discussion: “As for what is alleged from Scripture about the election of Matthias and the Deacons, it is nothing to the purpose. This has been abundantly demonstrated.”

\* The democratic bibles during the Protectorate falsified the sacred text by substituting, in the folio of 1659, *ye* instead of *we*; thus taking authority from the Apostles and giving it to the people. Field, the editor, received L.1500 for the forgery.

Our two first examples have been nominations to the apostleship and the diaconate, but we now come to a case more immediately in point, viz. nominations to the pastoral or presbyteral office. In the 14th chapter of the Acts, St Luke informs us, that Paul and Barnabas, in their second visit to Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and Antioch in Pisidia, “*ordained them elders in every city.*” This text is clear, convincing and satisfactory; for the whole transaction is ascribed to the Apostles; not a word is said about the people,—not the slightest reference is made to their pretensions. Nor are we confined to this negative argument; for the word χειροτονεῖν, which we translate to *ordain*, means literally to lift up the hand in voting, and might therefore have been more exactly rendered to *elect*. Of this criticism the democratical logomachist is fully sensible, and would turn it to his own advantage by the strange and almost incredible assertion, that it was not the Apostles, but the people who held up their hands to vote\*. But in the sacred text it is Paul and Barnabas who are said χειροτονεῖν. “They (Paul and Barnabas) “*elected them elders in every city.*” No instance in any writer, sacred or profane, can be produced in

\* The words “democratical,” “republican,” &c. are not employed to excite odium, but merely to avoid the continual recurrence of the same phraseology. They were first employed by the advocates of the people’s claims themselves. Paul Sarpi, for instance, has a chapter entitled, “The Government of the Church “originally democratical.” But the evidence is miserably scanty, which all the zeal and assiduity of that learned father could bring together in support of his untenable position.

which the term is used in the sense of persons constituting or appointing officers by the suffrages of others, and not by their own. It is therefore beyond dispute, that the choice, ordination and institution of the Presbyters in every church throughout all Pisidia, Lycaonia and Pamphylia was made exclusively by Paul and Barnabas.

Proceeding with our historical analysis, we come to the appointment of Timothy and Titus, not by popular election, but by the sole authority of St Paul, to superintend respectively the churches of Ephesus and of Crete, with exclusive powers of granting ordination and induction. In the Epistles addressed to these church governors, the qualifications they are to require in candidates for the pastoral office are minutely specified, but not a single word is said about the suffrages of the lay brethren. The despairing advocate of the people's rights catches eagerly at the admonition, that a "Bishop must be blameless," as implying their consent to his nomination; but this miserable subterfuge is at once cut off by the declaration a few verses lower, that the Bishop must be "of good report of them that are without;" from which it follows, that the consent of the Christian laity was only necessary in the same sense with the consent of the heathen world around them, as bearing witness to the irreproachableness of his life. We shall only add, with reference to the cases now before us, that if the assertor of an ecclesiastical democracy brings forward the election of the seven deacons as a sufficient precedent to illustrate the intention of the Apostles with respect to the

diaconate, the powers assigned to Timothy and to Titus will be yet more decisive with respect to the presbyterate ; and that, if a single example is effectual to open the elective franchise in the one case, two examples must be still more effectual to close it in the other. We may add, that throughout St Paul's writings, the only clear allusion to popular election is in his Second Epistle to Timothy, where, however, his reference to the subject is not encouraging, or complimentary. He prophesies " of perilous times," when men " would not endure sound doctrine ; but " after their own lusts would heap to themselves " teachers, having itching ears."

The elevation of St James, the brother of our Lord, to the bishoprick of Jerusalem, may be considered as an example of election intermediate between Scripture and antiquity ; because the fact itself, that he was appointed to the government of that church, is evident from the book of Acts, and from the Apostolical Epistles ; while the manner of his appointment must be ascertained from the writings of the Fathers. Their account is incompatible with popular pretensions. Eusebius quotes the following statement from Clement of Alexandria : " After the ascension of our Saviour, Peter, James and John, " who were held in highest estimation by our Lord, " did not contend with one another for the loftiest " place, but rather made choice of James the Just " to be Bishop of Jerusalem." St Jerome also, citing the most ancient of ecclesiastical historians, Hegesippus, relates the same fact. " James, immediately

“ after the passion of our Lord, was ordained by the  
 “ Apostles Bishop of Jerusalem.”

In the book of Revelations we find our Saviour sending messages or epistles by the Apostle John to the Angels of the Seven Churches of Asia. That these Angels were officers, presiding with extensive powers over the churches, is so fully known, and so universally acknowledged, that there can be no necessity for drawing out the proofs in detail. The following account of their election is from Clement of Alexandria : “ The Apostle John, when he settled at Ephesus, went about the neighbouring regions, ordaining Bishops, and setting apart such persons for the clergy as were signified to him by the Holy Ghost.” There is here no room allowed for popular intervention : the Bishops were elected by the Spirit, and ordained by St John. It may be added, that the first Bishops throughout all Christendom are continually represented to have been “ sent,” “ ordained,” “ chosen,” “ placed,” “ constituted” by the Apostles, without any mention of the people’s suffrages. To give a catalogue of their names would, as Eusebius remarks, be an endless undertaking. “ All the churches,” says Tertullian, “ produce their first Bishops apostolically constituted.”

The most skilful assertors of the people’s claims admit that nominations by Apostles were independent of all popular intervention ; but they contend, that a distinction should be drawn between extraordinary designations by inspired men, and ordinary appointments by later governors of the church.

They concede, that in the former case the suffrages of the laity were not required, while they insist that in the latter case they are indispensable. But where is the authority for this distinction? Where is it explained in Scripture? Where is it sanctioned by antiquity? Does not the assertion of it amount to an acknowledgment, that popular pretensions are without foundation in the Word of God?

The most anomalous elective franchise in the ancient church prevailed at Alexandria, and is understood to have been introduced by St Mark, the first Bishop. The Evangelist had been "directed by St Peter" to take the charge of that diocese, and having thus himself been nominated without popular interference, he devised a system by which that dangerous influence should be effectually excluded from the election of his successors. He restricted the right of voting to the twelve Presbyters of the city, and enacted that they should choose their Bishops from among themselves. On one occasion mentioned by Severus, the Presbyters, after their Bishop's death, met together and prayed, and then proceeded to the election. The senior minister declared to the Provincial Synod, that to them the right belonged of choosing their own Bishop. The Synod, while they assented to this claim, declared, that if the Bishop designate were worthy of the office, they would proceed to the consecration; otherwise they would reject him. This constitution lasted till the period of the Nicene Council, when the Presbyters, by mutual agreement, resolved thenceforward to elect the most deserving candidate, whether he were their fellow-

Presbyter or not. The circumstance, that the restriction of the elective franchise to the Alexandrine Presbyters was not only acquiesced in, and approved by the whole Church for several centuries, but ascribed to an Evangelist, is a clear demonstration that no idea was entertained of a divine right in the people of Alexandria to elect their own church officers.

Next to the inspired writers, the most important authority in this controversy is St Clement, of whom we read, "that he was a fellow-labourer" of St Paul, and that his "name is written in the Book of Life." This distinguished father was afterwards appointed to the bishoprick of Rome, and wrote an epistle, in the name of that church, to the church of Corinth, with the view of quieting some dissensions among the Corinthian converts, with reference to their spiritual guides. He thus describes the apostolic method of appointment to ecclesiastical offices: "The Apostles, preaching throughout countries and cities, ordained the first fruits of their conversions, after having made a spiritual trial of them, to be Bishops and Deacons over those who should be afterwards converted." Here it is manifest, that these church officers were not chosen by the people, but appointed by the Apostles, and could not possibly derive authority from a congregation, which they were first directed to form, and afterwards to govern. No doubt, the converts at the outset would be few in number; yet when they increased and multiplied into many congregations, they must have still continued under subjection to those governors, whom the Apostles had appointed over them. They had re-

ceived an apostolical injunction, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." To vindicate the principle of succession to church offices, St Clement brings a precedent from Moses, who, perceiving an emulation to arise among the tribes concerning the priesthood, referred the question to the decision of the Almighty, and pointing to the blossoms budding miraculously out of Aaron's rod, fixed for ever the succession to the priestly office in his family. "In like manner," proceeds this great pacificator, "the Apostles, knowing of the Lord Jesus, that contests would arise concerning the episcopal name," or order, "and for this cause having a perfect foreknowledge of these things, ordained these ministers before mentioned, and moreover established a rule of succession, that when they should die, other approved persons should succeed to their office. We cannot therefore conceive, that those who were appointed by them, or chosen afterwards by other eminent men, with the approbation of the whole church, and who have long discharged their functions, humbly, uprightly, peaceably, and disinterestedly, to the satisfaction of all, can now, with justice, be divested of their office." Some of the Corinthian converts, it would appear, had commenced a factious opposition to their ecclesiastical superiors, endeavouring to effect their dismissal, and to substitute in their room certain favourites of their own. These disturbances brought great scandal both upon the factious individuals themselves, and upon the Church. St Clement,



therefore, at great length, warns them against contentiousness and partisanship; and as the most effectual remedy for these evils, advises the unruly laymen to leave the church themselves, rather than continue to disquiet it by their splenetic humour. We have here the unsuspecting testimony of an eye-witness, that the officers of the church were not chosen by the people, but appointed by the Apostles, or by other distinguished persons apostolically entrusted with authority for that purpose; that this system was adopted to prevent disputes with reference to elections; and that the only privilege of the people was that of bearing testimony to the character of the candidates.

Before we leave the Apostolic age, the case of Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, may be mentioned, as remarkably to our purpose. This pious governor of the Mother Church, who was cotemporary with St John, and is described as having worked miracles, full of indignation and disgust at some atrocious calumnies which had been propagated against him, withdrew suddenly from his diocese, and was no where heard of for many years. The neighbouring Bishops, taking his absence for a resignation, or supposing him to be actually dead, met in synod, and *without reference to the people*, elected Dius to be his successor. Dius did not long survive, and two other bishops were in turn removed by death, when Narcissus, to the astonishment of the world, re-appeared, no less unexpectedly than he had vanished; "as if," says the historian, "he had risen from the dead." As he had now reached his 116th year,

the Synod gave him a coadjutor, who is stated to have been selected, not by popular suffrage, but by divine designation.

Among the most important witnesses in this great argument is St Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, who, in the case before us, is usually cited by the democratic advocate, and profusely eulogised for his knowledge of apostolical institutions, although, on other questions not less important, he is superciliously scoffed at, as an innovating, ambitious, arbitrary, domineering high-churchman. We rejoice to read these low-church eulogies on so illustrious a martyr, while we are prepared to shew, that on this subject his sentiments are as much opposed to those of his deluded eulogists as on other points of discipline and polity, which call forth all the thunders of their indignation. It is remarkable, that although, throughout his writings, we read of numerous promotions to the episcopal office, sometimes attended with the most vehement contentions, there are only a few passages which would convey the most remote idea, that the people were in possession of the elective franchise. These passages, however, have been so triumphantly brought forward, that we are obliged to give them a deliberate investigation. One of them relates to the appointment of Cornelius to the bishoprick of Rome, which St Cyprian describes as having taken place, “ by the designation of God and  
 “ his Christ, by the testimony of almost all the clergy,  
 “ by the *suffrages* of the people, who were then  
 “ present, and by the college of ancient Bishops, and  
 “ good men.” The votary of popular pretensions,

full of joy and exultation, bids us mark this word, *suffrage*, and acknowledge that his cause is won. But before resolving to yield an argument supported by the decisive grounds already mentioned both from Scripture and antiquity, we thought it necessary to inquire into the meaning of the word *suffrage*, as ascertained by the use of Cyprian and his contemporaries; and we found our courage re-assured by the discovery, that throughout all the Cypriatic monuments, there is not a single place where *suffragium* of necessity implies voting, while there are numerous examples, where it can signify no more than acquiescence, testimony, approbation, satisfaction. Thus, in his discourse on the vanity of idols, he speaks of Brutus putting his sons to death, “that the credit of his consulship might be raised by the *suffrage* of a crime,”—not surely meaning an elective vote. In the same work he describes the Jews “with violent and pertinacious *suffrages*, most earnestly insisting on our Saviour’s death.” He means entreaties or demands; for he could not mean that Pilate put the question to the vote, whether sentence should be pronounced. To select another instance: In his discourse on envy, he represents the people of Israel, on the return of David from the slaughter of the Philistine, “bursting forth into a *suffrage* of commendation.” In the case of Cornelius, there are unanswerable reasons for not applying the word *suffrage* to a poll or ballot. For, first of all Cyprian himself declares, that his contemporary was appointed by “a divine designation,” which, according to a pious maxim of his own,

“ would supersede all human voting.” Again, he would not be likely to give the people the elective franchise, while he denied it to the clergy, whom he restricts to the privilege of bearing testimony. And farther, in another of his epistles, he affirms Cornelius to have been “ ordained by the designation of God, and by the suffrages of the clergy and people ;” thus shewing plainly, since he had before described the clergy as only bearing testimony, that “ to give a suffrage” and “ to bear testimony” have, with him, the same signification.

The other passage in St Cyprian, adduced with much pomp and circumstance, in favour of plebeian assumptions, is a clause in a sentence, which, taken separately from the context, might seem to bear upon the question, although really it is quite irrelevant. The words are, “ that the people have especially the power of choosing worthy Bishops, and of rejecting the unworthy.” This expression of profound respect for the opinion of the multitude is not entirely in accordance with the general phraseology of the Carthaginian martyr, who is not addicted to warm eulogiums on popular wisdom, or popular consistency. He scruples not to call the people “ the unskilful vulgar ;” he unceremoniously reproaches them with “ ignorance,” “ weakness,” and “ proneness to be imposed upon ;” he describes them as having “ greater zeal than knowledge ;” he chastises their “ giddiness ;” he laments their “ rashness.” It would therefore be surprising, if he really ascribed to them especially the power of choosing governors for the church. But let us inquire more nar-

rowly into the circumstances of the case. Basilides, a Spanish Bishop, during a period of persecution, had incurred the heinous guilt of blasphemy and idolatry. Self-convicted of unworthiness, he had renounced his see, and Sabinus, a sound and pious presbyter, had been appointed his successor. Basilides afterwards repented his inconsiderate abdication, and attempted to resume possession of the episcopal chair. Perplexed by these rival claims, the people of the diocese determined on consulting the Church of Africa. Cyprian and his colleagues, to the number of thirty-seven, met together in synod, and returned an answer, counselling the Spaniards to oppose the restoration of the apostate, and continue faithful to Sabinus. At the close of the epistle comes the declaration so much insisted on by the diligent, but mistaken votary of popular election. “ A  
 “ people who yield obedience to our Lord’s com-  
 “ mands, and fear God, ought to separate from a  
 “ scandalous Bishop, and not pollute themselves with  
 “ the services of a sacrilegious priest ; because they  
 “ especially have the power of choosing worthy Bi-  
 “ shops, and of rejecting the unworthy.” From the whole tenor of this epistle, it must be obvious to every one but a political religionist, that not a word is said about the choice of a Bishop, on a vacancy in a see ; and that the only question is, whether the people have not a right to separate from an idolatrous and apostate Bishop, like Basilides, and were not bound in conscience to support a faithful, upright, and canonically chosen prelate, like his successor. The difference surely is not hard to be per-

ceived, between the power of choosing a new Bishop, and the power of breaking off from the communion of an old one, who had publicly declared himself a heathen \*.

The synodical epistle now before us is of great importance in this discussion, not only because it gives us the opinion of a numerous and enlightened body, but because the subject binds them to magnify the pretensions of the people, with the view of pressing on them a sense of their responsibility. Yet the only privilege allowed them is that of bearing testimony, for which the synod quote three precedents from Holy Scripture. The first is that of Moses being commanded to instal Eleazer in the priesthood *before the whole congregation*; and the second, that of St Peter, when he proposed the substitution of a new apostle in the room of Judas, *standing up in the midst of the disciples*. These precedents, it must be obvious, were not adduced as evidence of a poll or ballot being taken at episcopal elections; for nothing can be more certain, than that neither Eleazer nor Matthias was so elected. The object is to express, that the election and consecration of a Bishop should take place “in presence of the people,” “before the eyes of all,” and “not without the knowledge of the bystanding multitude,” “so that

\* To claim this latter power in behalf of the lay brethren is the purpose of the whole epistle. The Spaniards are assured that “a people cannot be free from the contagion who communicate with a flagitious priest.” And, again, “Those who continue in communion with corrupt, and wretched, and impenitent Bishops, receive pollution, and being joined with him in the crime, cannot be separated in the punishment.”

“ the crimes of the wicked might be detected, and  
 “ the virtues of the good declared.” The third  
 precedent is alleged with great caution. It is the  
 election of the seven Deacons, which, if the synod  
 had so intended, might have given countenance to  
 republican aspirations. But they deduce from it  
 the same conclusion as from the other two, inferring  
 that the people should be present and give their tes-  
 timony; and to prevent misapplication of the passage,  
 they only quote what refers to the publicity of the  
 transaction. “ Nor do we find the Apostles adhe-  
 “ ring to this rule, in the case of Bishops and Priests  
 “ only, but in the ordination of Deacons also, con-  
 “ cerning which it is recorded in their Acts, ‘ Then  
 “ the twelve called the whole multitude of the dis-  
 “ ciples together, and said unto them.’ All this dili-  
 “ gence and caution in summoning the people were  
 “ used on this account, that no unworthy person  
 “ might creep into the service of the altar, or into  
 “ any share of the sacerdotal dignity.”

Before leaving this synodical epistle, we must re-  
 mark a most important passage, in which a plain, and  
 positive, and satisfactory account is given of the ac-  
 tual method then adopted for episcopal elections  
 and consecrations. “ Wherefore the rule which has  
 “ descended to us from divine tradition, and apos-  
 “ tolic practice, ought diligently to be observed, and  
 “ indeed is actually observed by us, and generally  
 “ throughout all provinces; that for duly celebrat-  
 “ ing ordinations, all the neighbouring prelates shall  
 “ meet together where a Bishop is to be ordained,  
 “ and that he shall be chosen *in presence of the*

“ *people*, who most fully know the life of every candidate, and have most familiarly observed his conduct and character \*.” We have here a clear account of episcopal promotions in the Cyprianic age. The Bishops of the province met together at the vacant see, and there elected, ordained and admitted into their college the candidate whom they judged most capable of the office ; and the whole transaction took place in presence of the congregation, because the people were the best witnesses of his life and conversation.

A similar arrangement was observed at the election of presbyters. The diocesan, in conjunction with his Consistory, summoned the congregation, named the candidate whom he selected, asked their testimony to his character, and thus publicly filled up the vacant charge. For many centuries the rule was almost invariably observed, that no candidate should be ordained without a *title*, or nomination to some vacancy. It is a great error to suppose a primitive Christian congregation hearing a succession of unemployed presbyters pass through the ordeal of a trial sermon, and choosing the individual whose doctrine and address they most approved. There were no

\* The presence of the people was from the earliest times considered so important, that on the death of James the Just, not only our Lord's kindred, but all his own immediate followers who were still alive, came from all quarters to give their testimony at the election of a successor to the vacant see of Jerusalem. Tertullian also in his Apology declares, “ There preside over us certain approved elderly persons, who have obtained that honour not by money, but by *public testimony*.”



unemployed presbyters to preach before them ; and translations from one pastoral charge to another not only were extremely rare, but depended solely upon the judgment of the diocesan\*.

Before we leave the times of Cyprian, we ought to mention the decisive evidence of two celebrated eye-witnesses, his contemporaries, to the same effect with his own. “ Although the Lord,” says the illustrious Origen, “ had laid down rules for the installation of the High Priest, and had himself elected him, the congregation is convened. For in the ordination of a Priest the *presence* of the people is indispensable, that all may know, and be assured, that the individual most excellent, most learned, most holy, and most distinguished for every virtue, is selected for the priesthood : and this is done, the people standing by, (*adstante populo*,) that there may be no room afterwards for scruples or retractations. This is what the Apostle commands in the ordination of a Bishop, ‘ that he should have a good report’ (or testimony) of them which are without.” This great luminary of the Church, in common with the

\* If the Bishop thought that any of his clergy might, with advantage to the Church, be promoted to a more important charge, he could compel him to exchange the narrower for a wider sphere of usefulness. By the African code, (Can. 31,) the recusant forfeited the situation he already held. “ Let the Bishop,” says St Ambrose, “ appoint each minister to the cure best adapted to his ability.” (Lib. 1. Offic. c. 44.) And Theodoret censures an heretical Bishop of his time for raising the adherents of his heresy, however worthless in moral character, to the presbyterate or the diaconate, while he passed over the defenders of sound doctrine, however eminent for every virtue. (Tripart. Hist. lib. 5, c. 32.)

African Synod, confines the privileges of the people to those of being present, and of bearing testimony.

The other witness referred to, as contemporary with St Cyprian, is the Emperor Alexander Severus, who has been sometimes strangely quoted in support of general suffrage, though nothing can be clearer than his opinion, that the Christian laity had no other influence but that of witnesses. The following account is taken from his biographer Lampridius. Referring to the rules to be observed in promotions to different offices in the civil administration of the empire, "Alexander published their names," says the historian, "exhorting the people, that if any man had a crime to allege against the candidates, he should substantiate his charge by evident proof, under pain of capital punishment, if he failed. He assigned as his reason, that since both Christians and Jews were thus accustomed to proclaim the names of those who were to be ordained Priests, it was hard that the same course should not be taken with respect to the governors of provinces, to whom were entrusted the lives and fortunes of mankind." This passage illustrates the above citations from St Cyprian, from the African Council, and from Origen. It will not be imagined that the Emperor wished his governors to be elected by the suffrages of the people, or rather it is incontestable, from the very words of Lampridius, that no other privilege was allowed them, in such promotions, but that of bearing testimony; that this privilege was conceded in imitation of the Jews and Christians in their promotions to the priesthood, and that the Christian laity had no more

a right of suffrage in the election of their Bishops, than the Jewish multitude in the appointment of their priests, or the Roman populace in the designation of their proconsuls.

Among the monuments of ecclesiastical antiquity, there are very few so interesting, as the venerable collection, entitled, *The Apostolic Canons*. What precise date should be ascribed to them is not easy to be determined, but probably the greater number were compiled a few years later than the times of Cyprian. They are rightly styled by Calvin, “very ancient witnesses to the customs of the Church.” The 68th canon contains the following remarkable provision, which clearly shews the paramount influence of the episcopal order over the election of their colleagues : “It is not lawful for any Bishop to gratify his own brother, son, or other kinsman, by bestowing the dignity of the episcopate according to his own will and pleasure ; for he is not entitled to constitute heirs to the episcopate, and, from natural affection, to give away the heritage of God.” The 29th canon no less evidently implies, that popular election could not have been the practice of the Church, when this ancient code was compiled. The first part of the canon denounces excommunication against any Bishop, Presbyter, or Deacon, who should refuse to undertake the superintendence of the people committed to his charge. The latter part is as follows : “But if any Bishop, having gone to his diocese, be not received, not from his own choice, but from the malignancy of the people, let him continue Bishop, but let the clergy of

“ the city be excommunicated, for not having instructed the contumacious people in their duty.”

We may next remark, that the procedure of the Church, in the case of heresy and schism, affords another evidence to demonstrate in what hands the right was vested of making ecclesiastical appointments ; for when the body of the people happened to be heretics or schismatics, they were not allowed, by the orthodox church authorities, to exercise their privilege of giving testimony, but had ministers appointed over them, not only without their own consent, but contrary to their will. This imposition of a nominee upon a reluctant laity was continually practised in the case of the Arians and Donatists ; whose synods in their turn were equally authoritative, when opportunity was afforded them, in their treatment of the orthodox ; for all parties seem to have agreed, that the ecclesiastical authorities had the sole right of determining when the people’s testimony should be received or rejected.

Before proceeding to the second branch of our subject, we may briefly add one farther consideration, which, although we have nowhere seen it stated, appears to us of considerable weight. We refer to the *form of procedure* observed at all clerical elections. To whatever order in the ministry the aspirant claimed admission, the lay brethren, on the mention of his name, were required to answer audibly, “ worthy,” or “ unworthy ;” and thus to signify their approbation or disapprobation of his moral character. Our opponents take for granted that any layman, according to his own fancy, might casually

propose a candidate ; and that if a majority of voices chanced to shout in his favour, he became the people's nominee, and in that character was presented to the synod or consistory. But this is wholly to misconceive, or rather to invert, the canonical regulations ; for although the multitude occasionally, in riotous and disorderly meetings, usurped the privilege of nomination, it did not rightfully belong to them. By the rules of the Church, the people did not propose a presentee to be approved by the church officers ; on the contrary, the church officers proposed a presentee to be approved by the people. This important fact is evident from the decision of a general council in the case of the Milesian Bishops. The Nicene Fathers came to a resolution, that these schismatically consecrated prelates should remain in the episcopal order, but, until they were appointed to vacant sees, should not exercise episcopal functions, nor, in particular, enjoy the privilege of " proposing " the names of persons to be ordained to any order " in the ministry ; which privilege should belong " exclusively to those orthodox Bishops, who had " been uniformly free from the guilt of schism." Valesius, on the authority of Gregory the Great, asserts, in direct terms, the fact implied in this conciliar decree : " The Bishops announced to the people the names of those who were to be admitted " Priests or Deacons, that, if any man had objections " to the persons fixed upon, he might openly bear " testimony against them."

Hitherto we have seen no traces of democratic influence at elections ; and any supposed traces have

disappeared entirely, on a closer examination. But we have now the painful task of shewing how that dangerous power was introduced,—how it gradually enlarged itself,—what a fearful height it attained,—what intolerable mischiefs it occasioned,—and how, at last, to the delight and joy of all parties, it was universally extinguished.

From a very early period, the people's testimony to the merits of a candidate, as we have stated, was given audibly by the reply of "worthy" or "unworthy" to the presiding Bishop's interrogatory. As we might expect, the tone of this reply was not always confined within the limits of decorum, but was occasionally accompanied with vehement plaudits, or disorderly vituperations. By degrees these irregularities increased, and attempts were made to turn the right of bearing testimony into the right of giving a vote. In times of danger and persecution, the Bishops had little difficulty in restraining these licentious tendencies; but during periods of safety and tranquillity, and when the Christian population bore a large proportion to the heathen, the sanctity of their office was no protection to them from democratical usurpation. The divisions in the Church, caused by the Arians and the Donatists, contributed to weaken the episcopal authority. Many of these heretics would insinuate themselves into the cathedral with their orthodox brethren, on purpose to enjoy and augment the general confusion. The sacred edifice, crowded by a vast concourse from all the neighbouring towns and villages, became the scene of hopeless uproar and scandalous commotion. On the men-

tion of an unpopular candidate, however eminent for virtue and abilities, " he was assailed," says St Chrysostom, " with as many accusations as there were heads among the people." The wild caprice of these self-constituted electors, but for the solemnity of the occasion, would sometimes provoke a smile. A voice, for instance, is raised at Milan among the crowd, " Let Ambrose be Bishop !" The name is heard and repeated by the humour of the bystanders. It spreads through all the aisles and galleries, and is at last vociferated by the whole multitude. The individual thus casually mentioned was a layman ; he was a soldier ; he was not even a Christian. Sensible of the absurdity of his situation, the astonished warrior fled from the sacred honours thus obstreperously thrust upon him. He is pursued, overtaken, hurried back to the cathedral, and soon finds himself, by a rapid series of ordinances, baptised, confirmed, ordained, consecrated, installed a Bishop, a metropolitan \*.

No doubt, however violent the clamours of the citizens, the synod was entitled to resist them. But so powerful were the motives for concession, that notwithstanding the extreme danger of the precedent, few of them would have the Christian hardihood to maintain their independence. They would dislike the ungraciousness of a refusal : they would be fearful of giving rise to schism : they would conscientiously feel anxious to appoint a candidate, unless he

\* The citizens of Cumana, in like manner, from mere wantonness, desired a collier to be made their Bishop ; and the jest was turned into earnest, for the artisan was actually consecrated.

were notoriously unfit, who possessed that most important qualification, acceptableness to the people. But having yielded once, they were prepared to yield again. The pernicious precedent was in readiness to be alleged against them, and not against themselves alone, but against their brethren in other districts \*. To the obtuse apprehensions of the multitude, the broad distinction between might and right immediately appeared narrower, and was at length obliterated. Opposition to their arbitrary will thenceforward became a crime, and having had recourse to threats and clamours, while they knew they were in the wrong, they scrupled not to unsheath their swords, when they began to fancy they were in the right.

The pious but deluded advocate of a general suffrage indulges in Utopian ideas of the peace and comfort, the harmony and order, that would at once ensue, if this darling imagination were only realised. Dreamy visions float before his eyes of unanimous elections and peaceful settlements, crowded kirks and deserted conventicles, a powerful Establishment, and an impotent, subdued and falling Secession. But

\* On occasion of a vacancy at Cæsarea in Cappadocia, the people seized upon Eusebius, a layman, not yet baptized, and with the assistance of a military force dragged him to the cathedral, where, bursting in upon the assembled synod, they compelled them, by their threats, to elect and consecrate the unwilling object of their choice. The Bishops afterwards protested against the validity of their own act, which, however, they were obliged to confirm; and as Gregory Nazianzen remarks, the principle was established, that in case of popular violence the Bishops might resist to the death, but that having once yielded, they must not retract.



ought not experience to have dispelled these baseless fabrics of a heated and unregulated fancy? Is he not aware that the disorders at Antioch, on the election of Eustathius, were so outrageous and inveterate, that, according to Eusebius, but for the interposition of the emperor with a military force, both the church and city would have been destroyed? Has he never read, in Gregory Nazianzen, of the uproar and confusion at Cæsarea on a vacancy in that church, the difficulty with which the riot was appeased, and the remark of the historian, that the Cæsarean populace at such times were “extremely prone to “insurrectionary movements?” Has he never noticed the same ancient writer’s lamentations over the factions and disturbances produced by popular suffrage, his earnest wish that the elective franchise were restricted to the clergy, and his memorable declaration, that no republic was so disorderly as the Christian Church had been rendered by democratical ascendancy? Is he ignorant of what Evagrius relates respecting the insurrection at Alexandria, on the election of Pretorius, how the people rose upon the magistrates and soldiers, who endeavoured to maintain order,—how they murdered the Patriarch, pursued the troops into the temple of Serapis, pillaged that wealthy edifice, and burnt the garrison alive? Has he yet to learn the furious seditions at Constantinople, so faithfully recorded by Socrates and Sozomen; the imminent peril into which that great metropolis was brought by the contending factions, and the necessity of restoring peace by banishments, confiscations, and the sword? Are not similar calamities described to

have brought disgrace upon the Church at Antioch; at Ephesus, and at Milan? Do we not read in Ammianus Marcellinus of the frightful massacre at Rome when Damasus was elected; how—in time of profound peace, without any point of doctrine to divide the rival parties, but from mere caprice,—mere personal predilections and antipathies,—a sedition broke out with violence, raged unabated for several days, and was not put down till after one hundred and thirty-seven persons were stretched dead on the streets? And does not Zonaras add, when commenting on this tragedy, that he could produce six hundred more examples of the like frightful enormity? Finally, do we not perceive the great sceptical historian of modern times rejoicing over these abominations,—enlarging upon “the interested views,” “the selfish and “angry passions,” “the arts of perfidy and dissimulation,” “the secret corruption,” “the open and “even bloody violence,” continually called forth by popular elections;—and thus insinuating, that these intolerable abuses necessarily arose from the divine, and yet impracticable constitution of the Church?

The ecclesiastical authorities did not permit these evils to arise, nor to continue, unopposed; but from the variety of remedies or palliatives they adopted, it would appear, that the mischief at different places had arrived at different degrees of malignity, while, from the multiplicity of regulations for that purpose, we may infer the inefficacy of spiritual authority to stem the tide of democratical usurpation. We had intended to describe at length all that was enacted to restrain the intervention of the people, within

its ancient boundary of giving testimony ; but we are sensible that the tax upon our reader's patience would be too severe, were we to enumerate the various restrictions, by provincial as well as general councils, at Barcelona, at Arles, at Antioch, at Laodicea, and at Nice. Nor shall we describe in detail the progress of interference by the civil power, which, at last coming more and more decidedly in aid of the ecclesiastical, from the days of Constantine to those of Justinian, rescued the Church, to the universal satisfaction of the Christian world, from the disgrace and misery of republican innovations. It thus appears, that when the multitude began to take a part in elections, " they behaved themselves," to use the strong language of the pious Jeremy Taylor, " with so much insolence, partiality, faction, sedition, cruelty, and Pagan baseness, that they were quite interdicted above one thousand two hundred years ago ; so that they had their little in possession but a little while, and never had any due ; and therefore, now their request for it is no petition of right, but a popular ambition, and a snatching at a sword to hew the Church in pieces."

The destructive consequences of placing power in hands incompetent to wield it, and the utter groundlessness of the laity's pretensions to an elective voice, were well known at the period of the Reformation, as well as practically acknowledged all over Europe. At Geneva the clergy were appointed by the Council of State, because, as the learned Beza remarked, a popular franchise had " no ground in Scripture nor

“ any right in antiquity, and would give rise to infinite disorders.” In France, the pastors among Huguenots were chosen by their respective Presbyteries ; in Sweden, the highest ecclesiastical authorities were elected by the civil power ; the same rule was observed in Denmark, and among the Lutherans in Germany ; while in Holland, by the Synod of Dort, to which deputies of distinguished piety and erudition were sent from England, the rights of patrons, after due consideration, were solemnly and canonically sustained. Even the early English Presbyterians not only did not uphold the people’s fancied divine right, but, in their celebrated “ *jus divinum ministerii evangelici*,” disproved it with equal zeal and force of argument.

We have now demonstrated, by abundant proofs, that the people have no right, “ divine and infeasible,” to the choice of their own ministers ; that throughout the whole of the inspired volume, not one precept is addressed to them on the subject,—not one example recorded of popular election to any pastoral charge. We have ascertained, on the contrary, that the Presbyters throughout Pisidia, Lycaonia, and Pamphylia, were nominated by Paul and Barnabas ; those of Ephesus by Timothy, and those of Crete by Titus ; that St James was appointed Bishop of Jerusalem by the Apostles, the Angels or Bishops of the Seven Churches of Asia by St John, and the Bishops of Alexandria, from the days of St Mark, by the Chapter or Consistory of that city. We have proved indisputably from St Clement, that the Apostles, not only themselves exercised the

power of collating church officers, but handed down the same power to their successors ; while we have demonstrated from St Cyprian, from the Synod of Africa, from Origen, from Lampridius, and from the Apostolic Canons, that down to the close of the third century the people were restricted to the privilege of bearing testimony. Lastly, we have sketched out the rise and progress of democratic influence, the intolerable mischiefs it produced, and the universal joy and satisfaction caused by its extinction.

The important fact, thus placed beyond dispute or cavil, that the whole prerogative of designation to pastoral charges, from the foundation of the Church, was vested in the church officers, is a complete vindication of lay patronage from the charge of being an encroachment upon the privileges of the people. The privilege of giving testimony, to which, in ancient times, the congregation were confined, is in both establishments preserved to them entire and unimpaired. There is especially a close resemblance between the forms appointed in the Church of England and those described by St Cyprian, as having been received generally throughout Christendom from the days of the Apostles. It is required, that in the course of divine service, notice shall be given in the parish where the candidate has resided, of his desire to be ordained, and the people “ who best knew his life “ and conversation ” are invited to come forward and state objections. It is required also, that the ceremonial of ordination shall take place “ before the “ eyes of all men,” and “ in presence of the congregation,” who are urged, in the name of God, if

they know “ any impediment or notable crime,” that renders the young aspirant unfit for holy orders, at once to declare it. On the consecration of Bishops, these citations to the people are made more frequently and with more solemnity.

Nor shall we have any difficulty in proving, that the ecclesiastical authorities, by sanctioning the rights of lay patrons, in order to acquire the means of supplying the religious wants of the people, have not unwarrantably surrendered any spiritual prerogative. We have already shewn, that the duty specially imposed upon them by the Founder of the Church, is that of providing ministers for the lay brethren, according to such rules and canons as they from time to time may judge best calculated to promote the cause of sound religion. The precepts addressed to them in Holy Scripture upon the subject are few and simple, and refer merely to the moral character and spiritual attainments of the candidate. Having conscientiously complied with these plain injunctions, they are left at liberty, on other points, to act upon their own responsibility ;—the tremendous responsibility of advancing, to the utmost of their power, without regard to personal considerations, whether of hope or fear, the eternal welfare of the souls committed to their charge. They are not forbidden to allow the people an elective voice, if the concession, on a comparison of its conveniences with its disadvantages, appear prudent and advisable ; but consulting history, experience, and common sense, they can hardly fail to see the absolute necessity of refusing it ; and the more loudly, and fiercely, and per-

tinaciously the privilege is demanded as a right, the more firm, and unhesitating, and inflexible will be their refusal. Or again, if great temporal assistances can be secured, in the propagation of the Gospel, by permitting a restricted and well-defined interference of individual laymen, they may also, to the extent of the discretion warranted by Scripture, suffer the introduction of lay patronage.

The origin of lay patronage was the desire naturally entertained by every founder of an oratory, or domestic chapel, to select his own chaplain. He made an offer, therefore, to the Church, of thus providing for the instruction of the neighbourhood, upon condition that the privilege should be conceded to him of selecting, among duly qualified competitors, the individual most acceptable to himself. He offered at the same time to perpetuate the endowment, on condition that the same right should be continued to his successors. Here the Church seriously reflected, that by the concession thus required a great advantage would be gained to the cause of Christianity, while her own prerogatives continued undiminished. Her own officers were to examine into the qualifications of any candidate proposed to them, and were themselves to bestow upon him authority to minister in the congregation. She therefore felt herself obliged, in conscience, to accede to the lay patron's proposition. She would have felt herself responsible to God and to the people, if her own tenacity of power had obstructed an arrangement so materially conducive to the advancement of the Christian cause. It must be obvious that the same principle which intro-

duced lay patronage into a domestic chapel,—the desire of benefactors to appoint the beneficiaries of their own endowments, and of the Church to provide instruction for the poor,—would gradually extend the system to a parish, to a diocese, to a kingdom, and thus give rise to A NATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT.

Our view of patronage, as a concession by the church authorities, is necessarily implied in a fundamental law, the *jus devolutum*, which is common to both establishments. If the patron fail, within a certain period, to present a duly qualified nominee, the right of patronage devolves upon the party to whom, by the constitution of the Church or Kirk, it canonically belongs,—upon the Bishop in England, and in Scotland upon the Presbytery. The Reformers of neither country saw any reason why it should devolve upon the people. They were well aware, that the privilege which the patron forfeits by his negligence cannot naturally lapse into the hands of a party to whom it never has belonged, but must return to the ecclesiastical authorities, by whom for a time, and under certain scriptural reservations, it had been yielded.

Before the close of this Essay, we were anxious to have addressed, at some length, each of the two classes, those within the Kirk and those without, against whose fondly-cherished notions of the people's rights our arguments have been directed ; but we must confine ourselves to a few words. Let those *without the Kirk*, whose object is the overthrow of the Establishment, derive a lesson of moderation and self-distrust, from those early times which have been occupying our attention. We have already placed before their eyes



the frightful scenes of discord, misery and bloodshed, which at once afflicted and disgraced the Church during the period of democratical predominance. Let them now fix their thoughts upon another, not less important subject of reflection, by which no mind as much alive to religious as to political considerations, can fail of being powerfully affected. For from the history of the Church in those primitive ages, to which all Christians with one voice appeal, as the brightest exemplification ever given to the world of fervent piety and disinterested zeal—in those ages in which all the motives to Christian generosity, in contributions for religious purposes, were strengthened and enhanced by the immediate expectation of the Messiah's second advent, when all worldly possessions would be utterly insignificant—in those ages, when it was accounted no extraordinary sacrifice to give up all for the sake of Christ—it appears that the system which has peculiarly assumed the name of “voluntary,” must be totally inadequate to the momentous object, which it now so loudly and so obtrusively engages to accomplish. It is evident, that without national establishments, no adequate instruction can be provided for a whole community. During the three first centuries, when Christianity was slowly making progress without political protection, the Gospel flourished only in cities and large towns, where a wealthy and concentrated population could provide sufficient support for ministers and churches: but the Word of God was scarcely known in country districts, where no such helps for its propagation could be obtained. Hence the votaries of heathen

idolatry came to be called Pagans, or people of the country, and Paganism was the rustic religion, in opposition to Christianity, the religion of the towns, or of the civilised and better instructed portion of the community. The same evils would naturally follow, if the Church in our own times were stripped of its possessions, and left equally unprovided. Paganism would revive. Rural districts would relapse into unchristian ignorance and darkness. The poorer classes even in our cities would be very partially instructed. Classical and theologic learning, the indispensable qualifications for understanding and expounding the Scripture, would be little cultivated; congregations would partake the ignorance of their pastors, and religion would of necessity decline.

Again, let the ecclesiastical agitator *within the Kirk* beware how he contributes to render current, in the theology of the poor, that most dangerous phrase, "the people's right." If he means by it a right grounded on the original and apostolical constitution of the Church, (and what other right is of any consequence in this argument?) if he means a right divine and indefeasible, let him remember, that such a right admits no human limitations or restrictions. It must be perfect, absolute, unalienable. No considerations of expediency will entitle him, the Legislature, or the Assembly, to withhold it from a single individual. A privilege which God has given, it is not for man to modify or take away. Here then is an end at once to all inquiry as to the parties in whose hands it would be convenient or safe that the elective franchise should be entrusted. The

“saints,” the “brethren,” the “whole multitude of the disciples,” are expressions of much wider signification than heads of families, householders, or kirk-sessions. Let therefore the assertor of democratic claims remember, that he cannot, with consistency, advance one single step on the ground of right, unless he is prepared to go forward to the extreme point of universal suffrage. Reflections upon the fearful consequences that must result inevitably from the principle he has so rashly and unwarrantably assumed, may induce him to inquire more closely into its foundation, and cannot fail of shewing that it has *none*—that it is destitute of any basis either in Scripture or antiquity.

There is another consideration, which, if the advocate of popular demands values his consistency, ought still more effectually to moderate his zeal. For if we venture to put the question, “Are you not prepared, as a staunch disciple of John Knox, to acknowledge the corruption of human nature?” He will reply at once, “No doctrine can be more unquestionable; no language can exaggerate the depravity and hardness of the human heart.” We next inquire of him, “Do you imagine, then, that mankind will listen with delight or with aversion to godly views of religious truth?” He answers with oracular solemnity, “They dislike the truth; they will not endure sound doctrine; they are reprobate concerning the faith; their self-sufficiency and worldly-mindedness predispose them to love falsehood, flattering, and strong delusions.” Having received these orthodox and satisfactory replies,

we not unnaturally diverge into a kindred subject, and demand the reason of his anxiety to entrust the flock with the election of their own pastors? He readily rejoins, "My object is to secure the nomination of faithful ministers, who will be diligent in season and out of season, and be powerful as well as strict in inculcating the peculiarities of the Gospel." We finally request him to inform us, whether he thinks the multitude are pleased with the peculiarities of the Gospel, and are likely to select ministers who will preach them? He assures us gravely, that nothing is more certain, and thus gives us, with devout simplicity, to understand, that mankind are infinitely indisposed to hear sound doctrine, but that whenever they are called together for the election of their minister, they will shew an infinite alacrity to receive it. Why does the religious agitator not perceive the inconsistency of these statements? Why does he not acknowledge, that to secure the appointment of proper ministers, is a problem not so easy to be solved as he has blindly and empirically imagined? Why does he not regard the question with calmness—respect existing interests—refrain from grasping recklessly at perfection—teach the people to bear with patience trifling evils, rather than hazard all by rushing into innovation—in short, exert himself to extenuate defects, and re-establish tranquillity, instead of magnifying grievances, and fostering AGITATION?

THE END.



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